United Nations E/AC.51/2017/L.4/Add.9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
23 June 2017

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-seventh session
5-30 June 2017
Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Rodrigo Otávio **Penteado Moraes** (Brazil)

Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(Item 3 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General

1. At its 5th meeting, on 6 June 2017, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/2017/7).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of OIOS and of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed their strong appreciation for the report of OIOS, with many delegations expressing particular appreciation for the usefulness and timing of the report, in particular since results from the evaluation had been shared with the transition team of the Secretary-General designate before he took office. Delegations queried whether, in future, OIOS should continue that good practice in terms of the timing of reports on the evaluation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and if and when a follow-up evaluation of the Executive Office should be conducted. Delegations also expressed appreciation for changes implemented by the Executive Office that responded to the evaluation findings, noting that it was essential that structures were put in place to ensure that the office of the Secretary-General could function and respond to emerging priorities. A

17-10575 (E) 280617

Please recycle

delegation was of the view that the Executive Office should be transparent and provide the necessary information regarding the reform initiatives under way. One delegation further recommended that consideration be given, as a matter of good practice, to OIOS undertaking an evaluation at the end of the term of a Secretary-General.

4. Several delegations raised concerns regarding insufficient time for strategic thinking and policy planning in the Executive Office as indicated in the report of OIOS, and sought clarification about the specific measures that the Executive Office had taken to address the deficiency. Clarification was sought on the issues raised in paragraph 34 of the report, in which it was indicated that holistic, longer-term planning capacities of the Executive Office had declined over time, and in particular, on the approach that was being taken by the team of the current Secretary-General to address that issue.

5. Several delegations highlighted paragraph 39 of the report of OIOS, and sought explanation as to action being taken to address the claims of a lack of an Executive Office unit to pull together analyses from across the system to identify emerging issues or potential crises and follow up on "frozen crises" — those which have disappeared from the news headlines but remain critical from a conflict prevention standpoint.

6. Several delegations sought clarification on the decision-making support provided by the Executive Office, notably in relation to the comments of OIOS in paragraphs 40 to 47 of the report. Clarification was sought on possible measures for improvement. Several delegations sought clarification on whether the work of the Policy Committee, the Management Committee and the Senior Action Group would be absorbed by the newly created Executive Committee. In the event that those committees continued to operate, clarification was sought as to how they would interact to avoid duplication. Some delegations queried the new decision-making structures introduced by the new Secretary-General and the roles of the Executive Committee and Management Committee in relation to one another. Further, clarification was sought on the distinction between the two new senior positions that were established in the Executive Office, namely the Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination and the Senior Adviser on Policy.

7. As regards paragraphs 48 to 50 of the report, some delegations sought clarification on specific measures that had been taken to avoid the overlap in functions and responsibilities of the Deputy Secretary-General and the Chef de Cabinet, as observed in the past.

8. On the issue of time management of activities of the Executive Office, one delegation expressed concern that insufficient time was dedicated to providing guidance to the wider Organization, and stressed that it was important to "keep the United Nations system electrified by sending out the right pulses to the system", for example, through the Executive Office adopting new approaches in its work and in the hiring of staff for the Office. Several delegations expressed support for efforts being taken to break down the silos within the Executive Office, as well as support for the need to address that issue in the wider United Nations system. Delegations also reaffirmed the role of the Executive Office in directing and not duplicating the work of substantive departments, stressing the importance of transparency and the effective use of human resources.

9. A view was expressed that while many special initiatives had been undertaken, some initiatives were being drawn up without interaction with Member States. One delegation raised questions regarding the Human Rights Up Front initiative (para. 51 of the report), stressing that financial resources continued to be spent on the initiative, despite the fact that no mandate had been provided by an intergovernmental body.

The delegation sought clarification on the status of the unit implementing the initiative, enquiring for example as to whether it was still headed by a D-1 post and whether its placement continued to be in the Executive Office. Further, the delegation noted that the initiative had been funded through voluntary contributions and hence did not have scrutiny by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

10. Some delegations expressed their concerns regarding the level of extrabudgetary resources versus regular budget resources, questioning why the Executive Office was reliant on extrabudgetary funds. It was noted in particular that the analysis and planning capacity within the Executive Office was being financed through extrabudgetary funds, and in view of the issues highlighted in the report of OIOS pertaining to strategic thinking and policy planning, clarification was sought on whether requests for resources would be included in the forthcoming budget proposals.

11. Several delegations expressed concern at the imbalance in the level of staff resources dedicated to the Economic, Social and Development Affairs Unit as compared to that of the Rule of Law Unit and the Political, Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Human Rights Unit within the Executive Office. Recalling that the Organization was trying to shape a new development agenda, clarifications were sought on measures being taken to address such imbalances.

12. Regarding some inefficiencies in the servicing processes of the Executive Office as highlighted in paragraph 29, some delegations questioned the "trip captain" rotation system, which typically required substantive officers to spend three to four weeks undertaking detailed trip planning, including substantive work on the programme as well as logistics and ceremonial protocol functions, and questioned in particular why no recommendations had been put forward in the report of OIOS to address the issue. As concerns protocol functions, a delegation indicated that the functions should be performed by trained professionals.

13. Different views were expressed as to whether the Committee should make its own recommendations to the Executive Office, separate from those already made by OIOS. A delegation was of the view that the Committee's recommendations should focus on the future so that past mistakes are not repeated, which would help to make the Executive Office effective. One delegation was of the view that it was not convinced that the Committee should make recommendations that would have a formal nature. Notably, the delegation was of the view that the Committee should formulate messages of encouragement about reform but was not convinced that the Committee should go beyond that.

14. Some delegations reiterated that all the initiatives carried out by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should be in compliance with intergovernmental mandates.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. **The Committee took note of the report of Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.**